

The Athenian Mercury.

Saturday, August 25. 1694.

Quest. 1. **I** Desire to know what Reason the Church of England can give for not using the Oyl to the Sick, which they are obliged to do by the 5th of St. James, the 13th, 14th and 15th Verses, where we find it written, "Is any man sick among you, let them bring in the Priests of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with Oyl in the Name of our Lord; and the Prayer of Faith shall save the sick man, and our Lord will lift him up; and if he be in sin, his sin shall be forgiven him."

Ans. We find 'tis a Catholick who proposes the Query, by his quoting the Text out of the *Rhemish Translation*; though we shall much easier answer why we omit the Custom, than those of his Communion, why they still make use on't. And that they may have all fair play possible, we'll endeavour to represent the full force of their Arguments for this practice, which may be met with in their Annotations on the place, and other Writers; omitting, and not returning their foul Language, of *Unbelievers, Hereticks, Miscreants, &c.* which they there so plentifully load us with. They say for themselves,

1. That the Sacrament of *Extream Unction* was instituted by Christ himself; and that Venerable *Bede*, and other Ancient Writers, think the 6th of St. Mark pertains thereto.

2. They ask what Dishonour is it to God that a Sacrament should be instituted in the matter of *Oyl* any more than *Water*? Why Grace mayn't be annexed to one any more than the other?

3. That this prescription of the Apostle's was general and absolute; and not only to endure for a season, requiring us to shew where 'twas ever abrogated and altered.

4. The Church still continu'd the practice of it.

5. To prove it not a Temporary, Miraculous Gift, they ask, Whether Men were generally commanded to seek for health by miraculous means?

6. They interpret [*saving*] here to relate to the Soul, [*lifting up*] to the Body, but that by Natural Means, without Miracle.

7. They ask, whether all Priests or Elders had the Gift of healing in the Primitive Church? If not, they think it in vain to call 'em. If they had, why did any *Dye*?

8. Others urge, that the rest of St. James's Precepts were perpetual, why not this too?

9. That Miracles don't extend to the Spiritual Gifts, as *Saving* here, and forgiveness of Sins. This we think is the full strength of their Argument which we'll now endeavour to Answer.

To the 1. They contradict and Answer themselves, in their Notes on 6 St. Mark. Here they say, that himself instituted *Extream Unction*; But because they find nothing on't in the Gospel, there they say 'twas only what the Disciples did [a preparation to the *Extream Unction*]. Now a preparation is not an Institution. But farther, Christ did not there, nor any where else justify or command it, because the Apostles Heal'd the Sick without it; By taking by the Hand, a bare Word, the Imposition of Hands, Napkins that touch't 'em, nay, their very Shadows, as we may learn in their *Acts*, the Ceremony being *ad Libitum*; the Essence, as here, Faith and Prayer in sick and whole. If any ask how St. James here enjoins Unction, we Answer with *Lightfoot*, That 'twas a common Religious Ceremony among the Jews, retain'd, by the Apostles as Baptism, Imposition of Hands, &c. seems also to have been, some of which Customs were Adopted by our Saviour, and made perpetual, others not.

To their 2. What Dishonour 'tis to God to institute a Sacrament in Oyl, &c. We Answer, None at all if he had pleas'd, but they must not make this pass for Logic, or persuade us that whatever God may do, he has actually done.

To the 3. Tho the preservation be conceived in Terms general and absolute, [If any man] yet it related only to the State of the Church at that time, when Miracles were Wrought; St. Paul expressing himself in the same manner of the Temporary Usage, of Praying and Prophecy with the Head covered or uncovered, &c. and in several other instances. But where, say they, was it Abrogated or Alter'd? We Answer, it fell of itself, when the Miraculous Virtue ceased which attended it, since 't had been a mocking God to have retain'd the sign without the Substance ever accompanying it. 'Twas the Prayer of Faith which was requir'd with it, namely, The Faith of Miracles, both in sick and whole. Now we desire leave to ask them one question, for the many they have ask't us. Whether they think it Faith or Presumption in some of their own Wise Saints of late Ages, who have gone to Graves, and commanded the Dead to Arise; and when they have lain still, as stubborn as any Hereticks, refusing to hear 'em, have continued bellowing over 'em to persuade 'em to 't, refusing to stir, till dragg'd away by those about 'em.

4. That the Church still continues the Practice of it, as a Sacrament, and this in all Ages, and Places, after the Miraculous Virtue ceas'd, they pretend, but can never prove, the Councils they bring for't being about 800 years after our Saviour. We know the *Valentinian* Hereticks us'd it, but suppose they'll scarce plead their Example.

5. Nature teaches to seek Health by all lawful means, God does the same, in the command, *Thou shalt not Kill*. You think he also bids you do it in the *Apocrypha*, *Give place to the Physician, for the Lord hath created him*. The Nobler the Physician the better, the surer the means, the more desirable. Miracles, you grant were lawful means, and the Noblest of any other; therefore they were as much requir'd to be used, since the power not given in vain.

6. All the three words here us'd, plainly relate to the Body, *σώσαι, ἐγείρειν, καὶ ἀνοίξαι*, To save (as he sav'd others, himself he cannot) to lift up the Sick, or Bedrid. But their Unction is not to Cure the Body, seldom or never with expectation of it, why else do they call it *Extreme*? Therefore not the same with that in the Text, nor to be grounded on it, as some of their own Authors ingeniously confess.

7. There's no necessity of all having this *miraculous Gift*, 'tis enough if some had it in all Churches; which 'tis very reasonable to believe they had the Gift of Miracles, and particularly healing, being then constantly bestowed at the pouring out of the Holy Ghost, as we learn from the History of *Simon Magus*. For the Objection, None then would have died: It lies almost as full against the Miracles of all the Apostles, at least while among their Converts. But 'tis easily answered; Miracles were only to be wrought where and when God's Glory requir'd 'em, and where, as before, he gave the miraculous Faith to heal and to be healed.

8. This has been partly answered, and there needs little more than repeating what has been said, for its full satisfaction. Several of St. Paul's Precepts were plainly temporary, as well as this of St. James, and yet most of their Writings to be a perpetual Rule. What St. Paul says of Prophecy; as before, was temporary, if not also that of Marriage. What be Wages of the Priests maintenance, Schisms, the Sacrament, &c. are all perpetual.

9. What

9. What they urge, that Miracles here don't extend to Spiritual Gifts, as *Salvation* and *Forgiveness*; The first has been answered; The second was not the Effect of Miracle, but of Prayer, Faith and Confession, afterwards recommended; on which, as Dr. *Hammond* thinks, *Absolution* was pronounced by the *Bishop* or *Priest* [the Absolution of the Church in the Hands of the Rulers thereof] are his express Words. Whereas the Papists make this *Absolution* still distinct from the *Unction*, and both necessary to all that leave the World, just as they are departing.

Quest. 2. Is it not plain, that the Writers of the Scripture were Fallible, as well as others; and that the Apostles were actually mistaken in matter of Faith, both History and Prophecy; particularly St. Paul and others, as to the End of the World, which they thought very near, as we read from their Writings?

Answer. No, by the Socinians leave, it's so far from being plain, that the contrary is true and evident. And indeed were it not, could the Sacred Writers have been so grossly mistaken, and that in things of so great moment, as sure none can be greater than the End of the World, how could we think 'em Divinely inspir'd? If they could be mistaken in one thing, why not in another? and where can we stop, or what security for our Faith, when they who should be the Pillar and Foundation of Truth, thus deceive us? This, 'tis true, must be allowed, that the Apostles, as Men, were Fallible, and subject to the like Passions and Infirmities with other good Men, and were accordingly in common matters of Life, like others, sometimes mistaken. But when they acted as *Apostles*, or *Evangelists*, publishing the Gospel, or instructing the Church by their Writings, both in that and after Ages, here 'tis highly Reasonable, nay, necessary to suppose such an Extraordinary Assistance from Heaven, as should preserve 'em from deluding any thing that was false to the World; such assistance had the Penmen of the Holy Writings, in the Old Testament, who delivered all in the Name of God; and where they are quoted in the New, they are attributed to the Holy Spirit. Nor were the Apostles inferior to them; nay, had a more plentiful Effusion of all Miraculous Gifts than ever was bestowed on Men before our Saviour; and if they were but so much as Honest Men, their Writings must be also divinely directed, because they themselves equal 'em with the rest of the sacred Scriptures; when they have occasion to mention them. But now to *Paul*, for we own 'twill be in vain to Reason for their Infallibility, if it appears they have actually fail'd, which we deny they ever did, and are satisfied no Objection can be brought to the contrary, which may't have a fair and sufficient Answer. For this of St. Paul, which is most frequently clamoured against (though we must thank *Grotius* for beginning it; but if he won't allow the Apostles to be Infallible, we hope we need not allow him to be so), it seems unaccountable, how Men of Sense, and such deep Pretenders to Reason, should Run away, whole Dives of 'em together, with so open a Fallacy. The place they principally urge, is that in 1 *Thessal.* 4. chap. "Then we that are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep." And again, Verse 17. "We which are alive, and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the Clouds, to meet the Lord in the Air, &c. From whence they shrewdly argue, He includes himself, and therefore thought he should be alive at the coming of Christ. But does not any Child know that common way of Speech wherein we speak, our selves in the persons of others, especially when Members of the same Community; as St. Paul of the Church Militant? It's plain from other places, he could not himself think the End of the World was so much as near; and this he solemnly tells these *Thessalonians* in the next Epistle; which seems to be writ much on that very occasion, because some had mistaken his first, as others do now, and thought the World was not long to last. Again, he could not expect to live to the End of the World; for he says, he expected

soon to die; "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand."

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